

2025 Minor Review of Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG)

FAQs

What is the ASCCEG?

The Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups ([ASCCEG](#)) is the statistical standard for classifying data relating to the cultural and ethnic composition of the Australian population. The scope of the classification includes all cultural and ethnic groups in the world; in practice, only those groups that have a significant number of persons resident in Australia are separately identified. Those groups not separately identified are included in the most appropriate 'not elsewhere classified' (nec) category of the classification.

The identification of cultural and ethnic groups in the classification, and the way in which they are grouped, does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the ABS regarding the recognition of any group by governments, organisations or individuals, or the status accorded them. Nor does it imply the expression of any opinion concerning the relative merit or importance of particular cultural and ethnic groups or the people who belong to them.

In the ABS, the ASCCEG is used to collect, aggregate and disseminate data from the question on Ancestry in the Census of Population and Housing (the Census).

How is the ASCCEG Classification structured?

The ASCCEG classification has a three-level hierarchical structure that consists of Broad groups, Narrow groups, and the Cultural and Ethnic groups.

Broad Group Level

The Broad group level (one-digit code) is the highest and most general level of the classification. Broad groups are formed by aggregating Narrow groups that are geographically proximate and similar in cultural and social characteristics. There are nine Broad groups:

1. Oceanian
2. North-West European
3. Southern and Eastern European
4. North African and Middle Eastern
5. South-East Asian
6. North-East Asian
7. Southern and Central Asian
8. Peoples of the Americas
9. Sub-Saharan African

Narrow Group Level

The second level of the classification are the Narrow groups represented by two-digit codes. The ASCCEG contains 28 Narrow groups, most of them formed by aggregating Cultural and Ethnic groups based on the classification criteria (geographic proximity and a degree of similarity of cultural and social characteristics).

The only exceptions to this are instances where:

- A Narrow group is represented by a single country: 11 Australian peoples; 12 New Zealand Peoples; and 21 British.
- A Narrow group represents a single recognised ethnic or cultural entity: 22 Irish; 41 Arab; and 42 Jewish.

Cultural and Ethnic Groups

The third and most detailed level of the classification consists of 278 Cultural and Ethnic groups (4-digit level).

An example of the classification hierarchy is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Example of Broad, Narrow, and Cultural and Ethnic groups in the ASCCEG.

Broad Group	Narrow Group	Cultural and Ethnic Group
1 Oceanian	11 Australian Peoples	1101 Australian
		1102 Australian Aboriginal
		1103 Australian South Sea Islander
		1104 Torres Strait islander
		1105 Norfolk Islander
	12 New Zealand Peoples	1201 Maori
		1202 New Zealander
	13 Melanesian and Papuan	1301 New Caledonian
		1302 Ni-Vanuatu
		1303 Papua New Guinean
		1304 Solomon Islander
		1399 Melanesian and Papuan, nec

How is Ethnicity defined?

For the purposes of the ASCCEG, 'ethnicity' refers to the shared identity or similarity of a group of people based on one or more distinguishing characteristics. These characteristics include:

- A long shared history, the memory of which is kept alive.
- A cultural tradition, including family and social customs, sometimes religiously based.
- A common geographic origin.
- A common language (but not necessarily limited to that group).
- A common literature (written or oral).
- A common religion.
- Being a minority (often with a sense of being oppressed).
- Being racially conspicuous.

What is the Ancestry Standard?

The Ancestry standard (the Ancestry question asked in the Census) measures an association with ethnic and cultural groups which do not equate to countries or languages. The ABS uses the ASCCEG to collect, aggregate and disseminate data relating to the Ancestry question.

[Ancestry](#) describes the cultural heritage or ethnic origin a person identifies with or to which a person's forebears are attached. Ancestry is part of the suite of [Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity](#) (SSCLD). This framework was designed and developed by the ABS in collaboration with other organisations to support a nationally consistent approach for the collection and dissemination of data on cultural and language diversity.

Following the outcome of the [2026 Census topic review](#), the ABS will increase the number of collected ancestries from two to four to better reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian population.

Why does the ASCCEG need to be updated?

While the current version of ASCCEG had minor updates in 2005, 2011, 2016 and 2019, it mainly reflects the Australian cultural and ethnic diversity at the time it was first published (2000). The Australian community continues to change over time and these updates of the classification help to better reflect these changes.

The ABS has also received feedback from individuals and organisations identifying areas that need revision. This review will be informed by feedback from individuals and organisations, and data from the 2011, 2016 and 2021 Censuses.

What is the impact on official statistics?

When there are changes to a classification, data produced using that classification may not be directly comparable over time. The ABS provides concordance files and supporting documentation to make sure you can understand how changes to the classification will impact data produced from one time point to another.

The second round of public consultation, in the second half of 2025, will outline the proposed changes to the ASCCEG. This consultation process will provide an opportunity for individuals and organisations to provide feedback on the proposed changes before they are implemented.

How do I provide feedback?

You can provide feedback by making a submission via the [ABS Consultation Hub](#).

How will the information in my submission be used?

The information you provide in your submission will be used to inform the review and in preparation for the 2026 Census. More information about how ABS manages privacy can be found here [Privacy at the ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).

What happens after the ABS Consultation Hub closes?

After the ABS Consultation Hub closes, all submissions will be reviewed. The ABS may contact submission authors for more information if they have agreed to be contacted. The ABS will also seek feedback on the proposed changes to the ASCCEG in the second half of 2025.

Any further questions?

Contact us at standards@abs.gov.au with any questions on this consultation or for further information regarding ASCCEG.